S. Waldbusser
Carnegie Mellon University

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Remote Network Monitoring Management Information Base

Status of this Memo

This memo is an extension to the SNMP MIB. This RFC specifies an IAB standards track protocol for the Internet community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Please refer to the current edition of the "IAB Official Protocol Standards" for the standardization state and status of this protocol. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

Table of Contents

1. Abstract

This memo defines a portion of the Management Information Base (MIB) for use with network management protocols in TCP/IP-based internets. In particular, it defines objects for managing remote network monitoring devices.

2. The Network Management Framework

The Internet-standard Network Management Framework consists of three components. They are:

RFC 1155 which defines the SMI, the mechanisms used for describing and naming objects for the purpose of management. RFC 1212 defines a more concise description mechanism, which is wholly consistent with the SMI.

RFC 1156 which defines MIB-I, the core set of managed objects for the Internet suite of protocols. RFC 1213, defines MIB-II, an evolution of MIB-I based on implementation experience and new operational requirements.

RFC 1157 which defines the SNMP, the protocol used for network access to managed objects.

The Framework permits new objects to be defined for the purpose of experimentation and evaluation.

3. Objects

Managed objects are accessed via a virtual information store, termed the Management Information Base or MIB. Objects in the MIB are defined using the subset of Abstract Syntax Notation One (ASN.1) [7] defined in the SMI. In particular, each object has a name, a syntax, and an encoding. The name is an object identifier, an administratively assigned name, which specifies an object type. The object type together with an object instance serves to uniquely identify a specific instantiation of the object. For human convenience, we often use a textual string, termed the OBJECT DESCRIPTOR, to also refer to the object type.

The syntax of an object type defines the abstract data structure corresponding to that object type. The ASN.1 language is used for this purpose. However, the SMI [3] purposely restricts the ASN.1 constructs which may be used. These restrictions are explicitly made for simplicity.

The encoding of an object type is simply how that object type

is represented using the object type's syntax. Implicitly tied to the notion of an object type's syntax and encoding is how the object type is represented when being transmitted on the network.

The SMI specifies the use of the basic encoding rules of ASN.1 [8], subject to the additional requirements imposed by the SNMP.

3.1. Format of Definitions

Section 6 contains the specification of all object types contained in this MIB module. The object types are defined using the conventions defined in the SMI, as amended by the extensions specified in [9,10].

4. Overview

Remote network monitoring devices are instruments that exist for the purpose of managing a network. Often these remote probes are stand-alone devices and devote significant internal resources for the sole purpose of managing a network. An organization may employ many of these devices, one per network segment, to manage its internet. In addition, these devices may be used for a network management service provider to access a client network, often geographically remote.

While many of the objects in this document are suitable for the management of any type of network, there are some which are specific to managing Ethernet networks. The design of this MIB allows similar objects to be defined for other network types. It is intended that future versions of this document will define extensions for other network types such as Token Ring and FDDI.

4.1. Remote Network Management Goals

- Offline Operation

  There are sometimes conditions when a management station will not be in constant contact with its remote monitoring devices. This is sometimes by design in an attempt to lower communications costs (especially when communicating over a WAN or dialup link), or by accident as network failures affect the communications between the management station and the probe.

  For this reason, this MIB allows a probe to be configured to perform diagnostics and to collect statistics continuously, even when communication with the management station may not be possible or

efficient. The probe may then attempt to notify the management station when an exceptional condition occurs. Thus, even in circumstances where communication between management station and probe is not continuous, fault, performance, and configuration information may be continuously accumulated and communicated to the management station conveniently and efficiently.

o Preemptive Monitoring
Given the resources available on the monitor, it is potentially helpful for it continuously to run diagnostics and to log network performance. The monitor is always available at the onset of any failure. It can notify the management station of the failure and can store historical statistical information about the failure. This historical information can be played back by the management station in an attempt to perform further diagnosis into the cause of the problem.

o Problem Detection and Reporting
The monitor can be configured to recognize conditions, most notably error conditions, and continuously to check for them. When one of these conditions occurs, the event may be logged, and management stations may be notified in a number of ways.

o Value Added Data
Because a remote monitoring device represents a network resource dedicated exclusively to network management functions, and because it is located directly on the monitored portion of the network, the remote network monitoring device has the opportunity to add significant value to the data it collects. For instance, by highlighting those hosts on the network that generate the most traffic or errors, the probe can give the management station precisely the information it needs to solve a class of problems.

o Multiple Managers
An organization may have multiple management stations for different units of the organization, for different functions (e.g. engineering and operations), and in an attempt to provide disaster recovery. Because environments with multiple management stations are common, the remote network monitoring device has to

deal with more than own management station, potentially using its resources concurrently.

4.2. Textual Conventions

Two new data types are introduced as a textual convention in this MIB document. These textual conventions enhance the readability of the specification and can ease comparison with other specifications if appropriate. It should be noted that the introduction of the these textual conventions has no effect on either the syntax nor the semantics of any managed objects. The use of these is merely an artifact of the explanatory method used. Objects defined in terms of one of these methods are always encoded by means of the rules that define the primitive type. Hence, no changes to the SMI or the SNMP are necessary to accommodate these textual conventions which are adopted merely for the convenience of readers and writers in pursuit of the elusive goal of clear, concise, and unambiguous MIB documents.

The new data types are: OwnerString and EntryStatus.

4.3. Structure of MIB

The objects are arranged into the following groups:

- statistics
- history
- alarm
- host
- hostTopN
- matrix
- filter
- packet capture
- event

These groups are the basic unit of conformance. If a remote monitoring device implements a group, then it must implement all objects in that group. For example, a managed agent that implements the host group must implement the hostControlTable, the hostTable and the hostTimeTable.

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